

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 056947
ORIGIN HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 SIG-03 SS-15
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DRAFTED BY HA/ORM/JBROH-KAHN:EA/RA/FCBENNETT,JR./MJ
APPROVED BY HA/ORM:SCLOWMAN
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-----129800 070639Z /13

R 062143Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 056947

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, SN

SUBJECT: RESETTLEMENT GUARANTEES FOR INDOCHINESE BOAT
REFUGEES AND PROPOSED SINGAPORE TRANSIT CENTER

REF: (A) US MISSION GENEVA 2940(NOTAL); (B) SINGA-
PORE 842 (NOTAL); (C) SINGAPORE 790 (NOTAL)

1. SUBJECT OF ESTABLISHING A TRANSIT CAMP FOR INDOCHINESE
BOAT REFUGEES IN SINGAPORE WAS RAISED WITH UN HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES POUL HARTLING DURING HIS
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PAGE 02 STATE 056947

MEETINGS WITH SECRETARY VANCE AND OTHERS IN THE DEPART-
MENT FEBRUARY 27-28. HARTLING NOTED THAT HIS DEPUTY,
MACE, HAD WRITTEN TO THE GOS DECEMBER 31 REGARDING THE
TRANSIT CENTER BUT HAD RECEIVED NO REPLY. HE ADDED THAT
HE WAS WILLING TO FOLLOW UP WITH ANOTHER LETTER.

2. WHILE HARTLING WAS TOLD THAT THE USG CONSIDERS

THAT IT IS UP TO UNHCR TO PURSUE THIS MATTER,
DEPARTMENT FEELS THAT WE SHOULD REINFORCE HARTLING'S
EFFORT THROUGH AN APPROACH BY THE US. EMBASSY SHOULD
THEREFORE INFORM THE GOS AT THE HIGHEST APPROPRIATE
LEVEL THAT USG WAS IMPRESSED AND HEARTENED BY THE REMARKS
PRIME MINISTER LEE MADE DURING HIS FEBRUARY 17 PRESS

CONFERENCE IN SYDNEY (REF C) INDICATING HIS
SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEE
CONCERNS. USG ALSO PLEASED AND GRATEFUL THAT GOS WILLING
PERMIT 55 FROM SS GATEWAY CITY TO LAND.

3. YOU SHOULD EMPHASIZE TO GOS THAT WE CONTINUE TO
BELIEVE A TRANSIT CENTER IN SINGAPORE TO BE OF GREAT
IMPORTANCE, PARTICULARLY TO ENCOURAGE THE RESCUE OF
BOAT REFUGEES IN DISTRESS AT SEA. IN THAT REGARD, SECRE-
TARY VANCE HAS JUST MET WITH MR. HARTLING AND LEARNED
THAT UNHCR IS WAITING FOR A REPLY TO MACE'S LETTER.
WE ARE ALREADY ON RECORD AS DETERMINED TO MAKE
SERIOUS AND CONTINUING EFFORTS TO EFFECT RESETTLE-
MENT OF ANY REFUGEES ACCEPTED IN SINGAPORE. THE LETTER
GIVEN TO THE GOS CONCERNING THE REFUGEES FROM THE GATEWAY
CITY INDICATES USG'S GOOD FAITH WITH REGARD TO THIS
PROBLEM.

4. IF THE GOS WISHES TO MINIMIZE THE RISK ARISING
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PAGE 03 STATE 056947

FROM A TRANSIT CENTER, WE FEEL STRONGLY THAT THE MOST
EFFECTIVE WAY WOULD BE TO SET AN INITIAL LIMIT ON THE
NUMBER THAT WOULD BE GIVEN TEMPORARY ASYLUM RATHER THAN
TO INSIST ON IRON-CLAD GUARANTEES. (IN THIS REGARD,
PM LEE'S STATEMENT IN SYDNEY THAT, IF PRIVATE ASSURANCES
ARE GIVEN, HE IS WILLING TO EXTEND ASYLUM FROM NINE
MONTHS TO A YEAR MAKES THE SITUATION MUCH MORE MANAGEABLE
THAN HIS EARLIER 90-DAY LIMIT.) OUR TRACK RECORD VIS-A-
VIS REFUGEES IN SINGAPORE AND ELSEWHERE IS A GOOD ONE.
(DEPARTMENT UNDERSTANDS THAT WE HAVE ACCEPTED ALL REFU-
GEES LANDED IN SINGAPORE WHO WERE NOT RESETTLED ELSEWHERE.)
THE USG HOPES, THEREFORE, THAT THE GOS WILL FOLLOW
THROUGH ON LEE'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS BY INFORM-
ING UNHCR IT IS PREPARED TO BEGIN PLANNING IMMEDIATELY FOR
ACCEPTANCE OF A LIMITED NUMBER OF REFUGEES.

5. RE QUESTION RAISED PARA 4 REF B, WE ARE TRYING TO
WORK OUT WITH INSCO SPECIFIC RESPONSE REGARDING FUTURE
GUARANTEES FOR BOAT REFUGEES PICKED UP BY US
SHIPS DOCKING IN SINGAPORE. VANCE

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Message Attributes

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